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ABSTRACT

A discussion of the background and present status of special education in Taiwan considers obstacles to the development of programs for the handicapped. Accommodations and education for the blind, deaf, and physically handicapped are described in terms of recent rejuvenation and the limited or non-existent number of special classes in regular schools. Also considered are the development of pilot programs for the educable retarded, teacher preparation, the construction of curriculum guides, and the need for services for persons with mild or educational handicaps. (RJ)

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Special Education Programs in Taiwan, Republic of China

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SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN TAIWAN, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

I. Background Information

Taiwan, one of the thirty-five provinces in the Republic of China, which has a population of about fourteen millions, is a small, peach-leaf-shaped island with an area of 35,961 sequare kilometers. When the National Government moved to this temparary seat in 1950, Taiwan, hardly recovered from the ravages of the Second World War, had a frail educational structure with an attendance rate of school-age children (six years compulsory education from 6 to 12) of 79.98% and two special schools for the blind and the deaf accommodating 384 sensorially handicapped children and youth. During the last twenty years elapsed, the Government succeeds in realizing the economic growth as well as the educational progress under the acute increase of population (with 3.2% growth rate and 2.4% natural increase) and relatively meager natural resources.

According to 1969 statistics, the number of elementary school enrollment reached to 2,428,041, an increase of 267.71% as compared with those of 1950, and the school attendance rate for this age group of school children has risen to 97.62%. In the field of special education, the number of children and youth who benefit special education programs approximately totaled 4170, a remarkable increase of 1100% in two decades.

The educational opportunity of handicapped children and youth is guaranteed by the constitutional and legal provisions in the Republic of China. Article 159 of the Chinese Constitution stipulates that " all citizens shall have equal opportunity to receive an education " and on January 27, 1968 the Government promulgated another enactment providing a program of nine-year universal free education in which article 10 states that " The educational authorities ought to provide special education facilities or to assure appropriate school attendance opportunity for the physically and sensorially handicapped, mentally retarded and gifted children ".

Regulations concerning the Extension and Improvement of Special Education recently promulgated by the Ministry of Education enumerates the categories of exceptional children who should be taken care of by the special education programs. The article 2 makes it clear that " Those who receive special education, besides the gifted children of which will be regulated otherwise, include the following categories of persons :
(1) The mentally retarded; (2) The visually impaired; (3) The acoustically impaired; (4) Those with speech handicap; (5) The orthopedically handicapped; (6) Those with chronic medical disorders; (7) The socially maladjusted and emotionally disturbed". Though the school attendance of these children is not compulsory, the local educational authorities are obligatory to provide the educational

facilities for them. The article 3 of the same regulations proclaims that " The opportunity for the fundamental education of those groups of person mentioned above should be fully assured by the local educational authorities ".

II. Present Situation

It is interesting to observe that while the Republic of China realizes a remarkable educational progress, its educational services for handicapped children are still very insufficient. It is then justifiable to raise the question. " Does the educational development of a certain region or country exhibit different rate of growth within itself "? If it does, then we may assume that the special education in Taiwan represents the underdeveloped area of a full expansive system. Because it is not easy to explain how can in an educational system where exist 91 higher education institutions with 184,215 students and 843 secondary schools with 872,277 high school students and 155,947 vocational school students, only 6 special schools in addition to 41 special classes in the regular schools could be found.

The marked increase of the school-age attendance rate (97.62% at elementary level and about 73.8% at junior high school level) together with acute shortage of educational facilities for handicapped pupils indicates that exceptional children and youth in Taiwan are not sufficiently well taken care of. This problem is particularly critical for certain group of exceptional pupils. So far the special education in Taiwan covers only the blind, the deaf, the emotionally disturbed, the cripple and a very limited number of mental deficient children. No educational facilities tackle with the children with hard of hearing, the partially sight, speech disorders or learning disability. It is apparent that they are disseminated in the regular classes overpopulated. (The statistics show that the average number of per class was 50.22 in 1969). Under this circumstance, while most of the teachers are overcharged and preoccupied with the academic achievement of their pupils, these educationally handicapped pupils are always considered either as " problem children " or as " the feebleminded ".

This fact had not been well recognized by the public until the passage of"Nine-Year Fundamental Education Act". The extension of universal education to the junior high school brought the problem of exceptional pupils to the fore. While in realizing the ideal of " The education without selection ", the junior high schools (Kuo Ming Chung Hsueh) encounter a lot of problems in adapting itself to meet the multiplicity of needs of the students so variously composed, it is in this context that educational authorities engage in developing a variety of programs to meet the critical needs of educationally subnormal pupils, at the same time, the problem of handicapped pupils draws a wide-spread public concern.

Aside from the fact discussed above, it would be necessary for us to understand certain obstacles relevant to the development of special education in Taiwan.

(1) Instead of emphasis upon the Self-actualization of exceptional individual, the special education is always regarded in China as a philanthropic action destined to solve the social problems and to alleviate the burden of parents. Under this orientation, not only the educational goals are deviated from what they ought to be, but the special education facilities are not well integrated in the school system. With the same reason that only the severely handicapped persons are taken into consideration in elaborating special education programs.

(2) Due to the aspiration of parents to a scholastic career for their children, (an attitude commonly existing in traditional societies where the intellectual keeps a relatively high social status) and limited number of senior high schools and universities, the competition to succeed in the entrance examination becomes keener and keener, it resulted that the educational goals for both parents and teachers become primarily to push children to climb up the school ladder from one level to another, it is also logical to place strong emphasis on good achievement in " main subjects " which are related to the entrance examination. The reputation of schools and the competence of class teachers are judged, most often than not, with the percentage of their pupils that have succeeded in passing the entrance examination to a upper level. Under such a circumstance, it is natural that the educationally subnormal pupils including the handicapped are not welcomed in the regular classes, and in most cases, teachers care only the most promising ones in order to increase the prestige, they pay no attention to the drop-outs.

(3) Because of limited natural resources and necessary defense expenditure, the educational budget of the Republic of China is not tremendous. (Educational expenditure is about U.S. $81 millions in 1968, 4.08% of GNP). In view of the high cost and limited resources available for these purposes, the education of exceptional children is not considered as a priority project. The educational policy decision is always under the pressure of school-age population and manpower demands for economic growth. Special education facilities are at a disadvantage in obtaining financial support. Besides, the contribution of voluntary organizations to the educational services of exceptional children in Taiwan is not satisfactory.

III. Integrating the Blind Children in Elementary Schools

Historically speaking, education of the blind is the earliest developed in nation (the first school was set up in 1870) and in the Province of Taiwan (in 1886) among the diverse categories of special schools. However, there are now only three special schools for the blinds in the Republic of China - two residential public schools and one residential private school supported by the voluntary organization. The students enrolled are no more than 350.

The statistics show that there were about 23,700 blinds in Taiwan in 1963. The educational authorities estimates that there are more than two thousands school-age blinds and partially sighted children in Taiwan. For the latter group, because of lacking sight-saving classes, most of them are accommodated in regular classes

without any special education assistance.

Under the aid of the American Foundation for Overseas Blind and the UNICEF, the Taiwan Provincial Department of Education launched an integrated program for the blind in 1965 and helped to revitalized the blind education in Taiwan. Dr. Stanley E. Bourgeault of the AFOB, working as a consultant, plays an important role in realizing this reputed program.

The integrated program itself is in fact comprehended several projects.

(1) Establishment of a teacher training center at Provincial Taiwan Junior Normal College, so far 30 itinerant teacher have been trained.

(2) An extensive survey for blind children under the age of 21 has been conducted, it resulted in finding 481 uneducated blind children and youth, among them 165 have been placed in the regular classes with the special help from itinerant teacher of his community.

(3) Organization of a Braille Publishing Center where text books and other teaching materials in Braille have been prepared.

(4) Translation and publication of reference materials, a collection named " Education of the Blind " including more than 20 titles have been edited and distributed.

(5) Production of the necessary equipments for the instruction of blind children.

At the moment when the program was initiated, the public, including parents of the blind, received it with suspect while the immediate reaction from the residential schools was hostile.Nevertheless, this program turns out to be a successful one and the cooperation between the integrated program and the residential one seems to become possible.

IV. Renovating Education of the Deaf

Currently there are about 2350 deaf pupils enrolled in four special residential schools for the deaf of which two thousands pupils are elementary and junior high school level and neither special class in regular school nor integrated program ever exist in the Republic of China.

In comparaison, according to his sampling survey, Dr. Lao-Teh Wang estimates that the prevalence of the severe hearing loss (more than 60 db. ISO) among the school-age students in Taiwan would be 0.4%, it represents a population of ~~one hundred forty~~ fourteen thousands children of 6-15 ages old with profound hearing impaired. Except for a very small part of them could be illiterate, most of the hard-of-hearing children are scattered about in the regular schools without any special help.

It is until the last decade teachers of the school for the deaf in Taiwan recognize the fact that the normal means of communication should be by oral speech and lip-reading. However, the teaching speech to the deaf is still limited to small-scale experiments. Most of the teachers in special school for the deaf tolerate sign language and hesitate to carry out their teaching by oral method. Some of the

practionners even argue that only a small proportion of children can really grasp lip-reading and speaking well enough to make these a normal mode of communication, they insist that Chinese language is much different from European language by that there are many words pronounced the same way but with quite different meaning and thus insist that sign language is irreplacable. Nevertheless, language laboratory has been set up in each of the schools, and speech reading with auditory training are carried on upon experimental basis to the children of primary level.

The reform of education of the deaf has been elaborated, the project includes:

(1) Establishing a committee in order to reconsider the role of sign language in the education of the deaf.

(2) Studying the eventual possibility of an integrating program for the deaf at the elementary school level.

(3) Investigating and identifying the hard-of-hearing children in the regular schools and setting up the special classes for these aurally handicapped pupils.

(4) Assuring the oral method as the prime language of instruction. An environment must be created and maintained in which speech might be experienced as a vitally significant mean of communication. Consequently, the sign language applying in the existing schools shall be encouraged to abandon while new schools shall be established as pilot schools for this purpose.

(5) A laboratory of language teaching for the deaf shall be set up at the National Taiwan Normal University in 1971 and in-service training for the special teachers is planned.

(6) Providing adequate diagnostic and evaluative services and establishing speech-teaching class at preschool level either in special schools or attached to regular elementary schools.

V. Restructuring the Program for the Orthopedically Handicapped Children

There are at present one public residential school and thirty-six special classes providing for approximately 1300 crippled pupils.

Special classes are available in three kinds of contexts: (1) Special classes in ordinary schools; (2) Special classes attached to rehabilitation centers or hospitals; (3) Special classes organized by child welfare institutions. Most of the special classes in regular schools are incorporated with a medical care center or a sheltered asylum where accommodates the physically handicapped children

The fact that more than 95% of the children and youth who receive special education now are acute post-polio cases raises a question about the appropriateness of the current program. Due to the progress of public health, the polio cases have been diminished in Taiwan and that the ratio of polio in the population of cripple is getting smaller and smaller. It is believed that some day to come

it will be properly under controlled and thus the composition of special class population will be completely altered.

An investigation designated by the Ministry of Education reported that only a certain proportion of the pupils who actually received special education really needed, judging with medico-educational point of view, a special class or to stay in special school; for the rest of the population, who are mildly handicapped orthopedically, needed an integrated program with the help of itinerant teacher. The same report suggested that cerebral palsied children (no exact figure of prevalence in Taiwan is available now), who suffered multiple handicaps in most cases, have to be taken care of by special schools and special classes.

However, the special school and special classes in regualr schools are not ready to accommodate cerebral palsied children (especially for those severely injured). The reason is that it is not easy financially for a special school to maintain a clinical team and for a special class to have a special teacher with neuromuscular reeducation training. In spite of the difficulties that may present, the educational authorities are preparing to restructuring the program for this group of exceptional pupils. The following approaches are under consideration:

(1) To deplace those who shall benefit more in the normal environment among the pupils who are in special schools and special classes now.

(2) To establish resource room in certain strategically situated elementary schools where integrated program for the physically handicapped might be developped.

(3) To broaden the therapeutic horizon both in special school and in special classes.

VI. Establishing Pilot Classes for the Mentally Retarded

Special education of the mentally retarded children did not exist in Taiwan until 1962 when Taipei Municipal Bureau of Education, in cooperation with Taipei Child Mental Health Center and Provincial Taiwan Elementary School Teacher In-Service Training Center, set up a pilot class for this group of children at an elementary school. With the technical aid of a mental health team, the pilot class screened twenty-nine mildly retarded children from more than hundred applicants and was equipped with three special teachers for this experimental task. For the convenience of teaching, the pupils were further divided into two groups, the older group with fifteen children while the younger group with fourteen.

The modest beginning won the support, both from the educational authorities and from the public, thus after one years experience, two groups were formally separated into two classes and a third class was set up in September 1963. In March 1965, one class each was initiated in three more elementary schools at Taipei and another class was added to the original school. At the same time, another group of eleven teachers who have already completed one year special educatio training for this purpose joined to this pilot class project.

Even though the pilot classes did not succeed in expanding to become an overall nationwide program, the contribution of this program is nevertheless tremendous. At first, these classes arose interest of the general public in the problem of mentally retarded children. Secondly, the clinical and teaching experiences accumulated

during the operation of these classes, particularly the new curriculum designed in favor of the adjustment of these pupils, are useful resources which may serve as the basis for further development of the education of mentally subnormal children in Taiwan.

Pilot classes for the educable mentally retarded pupils at the secondary education level came into existence in September 1970, two years after the Nine-Year Fundamental Education Act was officially put into effect. As we have indicated above, the extention of universal education to junior high school has an immense impact upon the education in Taiwan, it results in uncovering a lot of problems having overshadowed by the preparation for competitive entrance examination in the schools. Once the orientation alters, the problems of student's adjustment to the class come to the fore. The public focus now their attention on the exceptional pupils, in particular, educationally subnormal pupils.

In responding to this critical demand, the Research Institute of Education, National Taiwan Normal University develops a test program serving for educational diagnosis and homogeneous grouping for instruction in the junior high schools. In addition to three scales (General Ability Test, Study Habit Inventory, Psychomotor Ability Test) which have already been constructed during 1969-1970, four aptitude tests are in elaboration this year, and three others tests (Vocational Interests Inventory, Personality Inventory, Junior High School Student Achievement Tests) shall be undertaken in the third year. Besides, the Research Institute of Education develops a special education program designed to demonstrate effective approach to assisting the retardates during their junior high school years.

In cooperation with the Taipei Municipal Bureau of Education, the Research Institute of Education has organized four pilot classes for the educable mentally retarded in the junior high schools in Taipei in 1970. This program tries to establish a model for the special classes in the junior high school and also aims at the following objectives:

(1) To investigate the cognitive structure, the learning process and the behavior characteristics of the educable mentally retarded.
(2) to develop the diagnostic and evaluative techniques of the retarded, the differential diagnosis between mental retardation and specific learning disabilities is emphasized.
(3) To elaborate a curriculum guide applicable to the level of junior high schools for the special teachers.
(4) To accumulate teaching techniques and general experiences of the education of the retarded.

The students of the pilot classes are mainly composed of two groups: those who were identified with the aid of intelligent tests from the students who entered the junior high schools in Taipei in September 1970 and those who completed their six-year compulsory education in the special classes of the elementary schools.Each pilot class consists of 15 to 20 students who have a I.Q. of 50 to 70 and a CA of 12 to 18. Three teachers are assigned to each

class and are responsible for most of the educational activities. As the special education programs terminate the public school education for most of the retarded, the curriculum is expected to a combination of academic subject matters and the social-occupational skills that retardates need to function in society.

The pioneer work of the Research Institute of Education in its attempt to tackle with the problem of mentally subnormal children at the junior high school level (which represents 3% of the age population) gives an imputus to the effort in this direction. Taipei Municipal Bureau of Education has decided to set up ten other pilot classes next year. It is recognized that the establishment of pilot class might diminish the negative affects of inappropriate learning and accompanying frustration experienced by the retardates in the regular classes, this action also offers the promise to ameliorate the existing situation of public school.

Another program concerning the establishment of 50 pilot classes for the educable mentally retarded children at the elementary school level in the Province of Taiwan is already on its preparatory stage. Provincial Taipei Junior Normal College, with the aid of UNICEF and East-West Center, Hawaii, is responsible for the operation of this program. Taiwan Provincial Department of Education has worked out a five-year plan designing to institute ten pilot classes each years, the first ten classes shall be organized in 1971.

VII. *Preparing* Special Teachers

To a very large degree, the worth of the special education program for exceptional children depends upon the quality of the teaching staff. However, the fact is that the shortage of trained, qualified personnel becomes acute in the Republic of China at present. Recognizing this fact, the educational authorities attempt to launch a variety of programs with a view to preparing special teachers urgently needed.

The pioneer effort began in 1963 when the Taipei Municipal Bureau of Education earmarked a sum of money to Taipei Child Mental Health Center for the training of teachers who prepared to operate the pilot classes for the mentally retarded children. The duration of training was one year.

The Itinerant Teacher Training Center of the Blind located at the Provincial Tainan Junior Normal College was established in 1966. For the first time a permanent institute of this kind was organized and maintained. All the participants have two years of experiences in elementary school teaching. The training program offers one full year of study leave at regular pay, a waiver of all institutional fees, full board and lodging in a student hostel. Ten to fifteen teachers are trained each year.

Four years later, another center of the same kind but designed to prepare the special teachers of mentally retarded was set up at Provincial Taipei Junior Normal College. It has been decided that twenty teachers will be trained each year.

Taiwan Provincial Department of Education organized two workshops in the summer of 1968 and 1969. Each workshop offered one month in-service training courses for about forty teachers of special school.

The teacher training program at the Research Institute of Education, National Taiwan Normal University, offers another model which seems to be not only economic but also practical. In recognition of the critical needs for competent special teachers necessary for the operation of pilot classes, the Research Institute of Education worked out a teacher training program with an annual budget less than U.S.$3000. Twelve teachers were selected by the schools where the pilot class located. All of them are university graduates majoring in education, psychology or social work.

This program is actually composed of two parts, it begins with a workshop which offers one-month pre-service training courses for attendants and followed by in-service guidance lasting for the whole year.

It is for this purpose that the Research Institute of Education sets up a working team which provides in-service guidance and technical assistance to the special teachers. The working team meets all the special teachers once a week either at the Institute or in the school where pilot class is located.

The role of the working team is:

(1) To inform the special teachers the recent knowledge of special education by arranging the group discussion and by translating foreign basic reference materials into Chinese.
(2) To assist in the case conference and serve as a clinical team.
(3) To work with the teacher for preparing a curriculum guide.
(4) To evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching programs.
(5) To design and conduct the research and experimentation on mental retardation.

VIII. Constructing Curriculum Guides for Special Schools

Until now the special schools in Taiwan organize its teaching programs according to an official curriculum guide prescribed by the Ministry of Education for the regular class. In most of the cases, certain modifications are made to meet the specific need of exceptional pupils. Nevertheless, it still can not fit the purpose.

Recognizing that the curriculum for special schools and special classes should be more flexible and adjustment-oriented, the Ministry of Education decided to construct a series of curriculum guides specifically designed for each category of exceptional pupils. Consequently, A Standing Committee for Curriculum Development for Special Schools was set up in July 1969, more than seventy experts participated in such a complicated task. This standing committee is composed of many sub-committees designated to make special studies

or to discuss and draft the teaching guide for various subject fields. It is planned that four sets of curriculum guide for each of the followi groups of exceptional children shall be completed and issued within three years: (1) The blind, (2) The deaf, (3) The physically handicapped, (4) The mentally retarded.

Each set of curriculum guide is composed of many parts: (1) Description of general goal, life function and objectives of each teaching unit, (2) Course of study (or field of experience) and division of time, (3) Guideline for teaching activity, (4) Pertinent teaching material.

According to the outline of the curriculum considered, the goals of special education programs should be placed on realization of individual potentiality, social adjustment, diminution of handicaps, development of self-management etc.. Consequently, the emphases of the curriculum are placed on the acquisition of skills and knowledge with instrumental value(such as in mathematics), health and civic morality, language art, vocational training, fine arts, social studies and science.

IX. Conclusion

In recent years, the government has become increasingly concerned about the nation-wide problems of handicapped children and youth. This concern has manifested itself in the afore-mentioned programs aimed at ameliorating some of these problems.

Although the efforts and notable advances have been made in the past decade, the educational services for exceptional children in Taiwan are still far from the well-intentional goals that the educational authorities have conceived. Many well-planned projects remain, on socioeconomic ground, in the blue-print stage.

It is interesting to observe that there appears an increasing sophistication on the appropriateness of residential program which is traditionally set for almost any category of exceptional children. Within the past years, a shifting emphasis upon the integrated system has become evident. It is recognized that the handicapped child should be included in regular school program to the fullist possible extent with a view to preparing for normal life in the community. This conceptual change is manifested itself in the education of the blind and also in the remarkable upsurge in the oral education (instead of sign language) for the deaf pupils.

Another tendency is the increasing concern about the service for the educationally handicapped pupils - a group of persons whose need for special educational help is no less than the profound sensorially handicapped, cripple or mentally deficient children. This group consists of pupils with : (1) Partially-sight, (2) Moderate hearing loss, (3) Speech defects, (4) Epilepsy, (5) Specific learning disabilities, and (6) Educational subnormality with emotional complication. This new horizon implies the expansion of special education programs to cover a school-aged population which double or triple in number the subjects that are actually served for.

It is one thing to say that this group of children and youth have already attended school and are educated, but it is quite another matter to feel sure that these pupils educationally handicapped are appropriately educated. Even though it is inevitable that certain gap between one's academic achievement and intellectual potentiality could be existed, the underachievement due to handicaps such as what have been enumerated in the foregoing paragraph represents the inappropriateness of educational program to the pupil, the deprivation of special education facilities involves a defect in the educational system.

Since the extension of fundamental education in 1968, the term " mental retardation " has been in vogue. Both the school teachers and the public talk of the problem of mentally retarded, however, a clinical inquiry will find that a great number of children regarded as intellectually subnormal are really educationally subnormal rather than mentally damaged, the development of psychomedical service seems to be necessary for assuring an accurate differential diagnosis.

In addition to adequate diagnostic and evaluative service, it is widely felt that national centers of educational research and instructional materials for the handicapped are urgently needed. In responding to this demand, National Taiwan Normal University has decided to set up a special education center which shall be operated in 1971. The center is designed:

(1) To conduct basic research on learning process and its problems concerned (such as learning disabilities and mental deficiency) and to carry on experimentation in the application of new findings and techniques concerning special education.
(2) To serve as educational center for the in-service and pre-service training of professional personnel.
(3) To serve as educational media and material center.
(4) To conduct nation-wide assessment and survey for the collection and analysis of prevalence, personal and socioeconomic characteristics of the handicapped children.

It is expected that more of child guidance clinics or diagnostic and therapeutic services such as Taipei Child Mental Hygiene Clinic will be established in Taiwan. It is obvious that psychomedical service agencies will play an important role in developing special education programs and contribute concomitantly to training and research. At the present stage, none of the service agencies for exceptional children can alienate itself from their secondary functions such as training and research. It is absolutely necessary that coordination and collaboration among different institutions and services concerned should be assured in favor of the mobilization of resources.

In conclusion, the special education in the Republic of China is still at its first stage of development. Nevertheless, it has already exemplified progress, and its future is promising.